

*This summer I was asked to drive Gazm on their first tour. They are one of the newer Montreal bands, formed of people who moved to this cold bilingual city from other parts of Canada. The tour was amazing and gave me an excellent chance to get to know these young punks and see what their band is all about. You may have heard about this band and if you haven't you will soon hear about them or their new record Menace to tha Earth. They play hardcore well like so many bands these days, a good sound that is what you know you love but without being just a throwback or a rip-off of current trends. This band has gotten people in Montreal moving their bodies at shows I haven't seen dancing at in ages and has now been making fans and friends everywhere new they play. I had the pleasure of interviewing them the morning after a huge holiday benefit show put on by the large francophone hardcore scene in Montreal.*

*Interview and introduction by Martin Tensions. Photos provided by Imogen Reid, Arina Moiseychenko, and the band.*

**GAZM is: Bad Bill: Vocals | Sebbe: Guitar | Sienna: Bass | Joshua: Drums**

**MRR: How did the band start?**

Sebbe: Sienna (who I knew from previously living in Toronto) came up to me at a show and asked me if I could write riffs. I was like, hell yeah!

Bad Bill: And then I knew Sienna from living in residence together in our first year. We were the only two punks and we thought that we should totally start a band. We ran into Joshua, who I had been meaning to message, getting food on the street and then brought the idea up to him.

**MRR: But what was the pitch? What were the bands you first wanted to sound like?**

Bad Bill: I think I just said we wanted to start a hardcore band.

Sienna: There was a long time where we were like "We wanna be weirdos, we wanna sound like Crazy Spirit."

Sebbe: And then I thought it would be funny to take one of these popular, stripped down punk bands and make them go crossover like all the original sort of stripped down '80s hardcore bands did back

in the day. Like every time I talk to Greg or Ryan (from S.H.I.T.), I jokingly ask them when they're going to go crossover. They said they'd never do it, so I had to do it.

**MRR: So now that you're post demo and post first EP, what are the bands that you think you sound like?**

Sienna: Not like Crazy Spirit.

Bad Bill: I think we very quickly departed from that.

Sebbe: Some great contemporary bands that I really like are Red Death and Triage.

**MRR: But do you think you sound like those bands? What's the riff soup and the influences?**

Sebbe: I would say bands like Cro-Mags, the Accused, Whiplash, Slayer, Metallica. I let the contemporary stuff around me bleed into what I do.

Bad Bill: I have a hard time contextualizing the band.

**MRR: Is Gazm a punk band, a hardcore band, or a metal band? Like if it came down to one MP3 tag?**

Sienna: I'd say we're definitely a hardcore band.

Bad Bill: Yeah, we're a hardcore band.

**MRR: Settled. So who is the eponymous menace to the earth?**

Bad Bill: Gazm.

**MRR: So that's what it's about, Gazm is the menace to the earth?**

Bad Bill: Absolutely. So one thing I'm trying to get away from in my lyrics is this idea of being a threat to this fictional "you," but like I don't know who the "you" is most of the time. So (the song) "Menace to the Earth" was kinda like that where I was going "I'm a menace to the earth / I'm a menace to you" but I changed it to "We're a menace to the earth / We're a menace to you."

**MRR: But what's "Easy 2 See"?**

Bad Bill: That song is about people who are dressing like punks, acting like punks, and presenting as punks but doing the same shitty things that everybody else does. I'm not here for that. It's also about people popping in when it's trendy and then popping out once they've exhausted their social resources.

Sebbe: I was talking to Joshua about this earlier but I feel like there are people, like yourself, who came into punk because they wanted to learn different values that are outside of the mainstream but then there are others, who maybe didn't totally fit in with regular society, who come in and try to accomplish what they wanted to in normal society but within punk. They kind of feel like they are able to manipulate and have power over people here.

Bad Bill: I also think that as someone who grew up in a really small city on the east coast of Canada, where there is no hardcore and where you spend years trying to start bands and organizing shows in your parents' garage, it really pisses me off when it gets taken for granted because it's something so important to me, it changed my life.

**MRR: Bill and Joshua are both from small towns in New Brunswick, Sebbe and Sienna are from the biggest city in Canada, and then you all moved to Montreal and started the band. What perspectives do you bring from your different origins and how do they work together? Do you feel like you have different perspectives on punk based on where you grew up?**

Sebbe: There's always the age old debate about which city, Montreal or Toronto, is "better." It all depends. In Montreal, there's way more support for all kinds of artists and there's cheap rent but then again

you have a terrible winter for six months. Toronto has a milder winter but while the city is bigger, the artistic community is less dense. In Toronto, you'll exhaust your options pretty quickly but in Montreal, it just keeps going. You can't even get through all of the anglophone scenes and then on top of that, there are all of the francophone scenes. The punk scene is very good in Toronto, but it's kind of an anomaly. In Montreal, the scene is so multifaceted and there are so many little sections of it.

Bad Bill: I think the whole reason I chose to move to Montreal was because there was nothing in Fredericton. There's no contemporary art, no punk scene, no graffiti, and because of this, there's this part of me that is so proactive about the punk scene here. On the other hand though, it's made me a little bit jaded. Like sometimes when I hear people complaining about the scenes in big cities—and not to say that these scenes don't have very important and valid issues—I'm like, "I didn't even have a scene growing up!" For so many people in these large cities, they just had to go a show and if they liked it, it was a thing they could continue doing. In the smaller places, you need to be the one to start a punk band and get put on shitty bills with bands you don't sound at all like on a weeknight while you're in high school. You need to put on house shows that no one is going to come to because it's the same five bands always playing. All this to say is that moving to Montreal was the best decision I ever made.

Joshua: I feel like New Brunswick has a thriving music scene as a whole, but the punk and hardcore scenes are kind of nonexistent. One of my favorite things about Montreal in comparison to back home is that you're actually going to play with bands that you fit with and with like-minded people. It was sick to get exposure to different scenes when you got put on to a super genre-varied bill but it's also really hard to help your respective scene grow when this happens.

Bad Bill: Yeah, like whenever I was trying to start hardcore bands in New Brunswick, I was always trying to get other teenagers who would maybe like punk to play in punk bands and that's why these bands never really lasted. I'd be trying to get people who really liked garage rock to both play and write riffs in a hardcore band that I was trying to start. I don't want it to sound like it was no fun though—I'd probably do it all over again!

Joshua: I still really appreciate and am thankful for my time playing music in New Brunswick.

Sienna: It makes sense why so many people move to Montreal, it's the closest real big city from New Brunswick and also Toronto so it's a nice breath of fresh air for everyone.

**MRR: Do you think that your different perspectives make Gazm? How do they fit together in Gazm?**

Sienna: I don't think we really bring that into the band, like maybe deep down we feel certain ways.

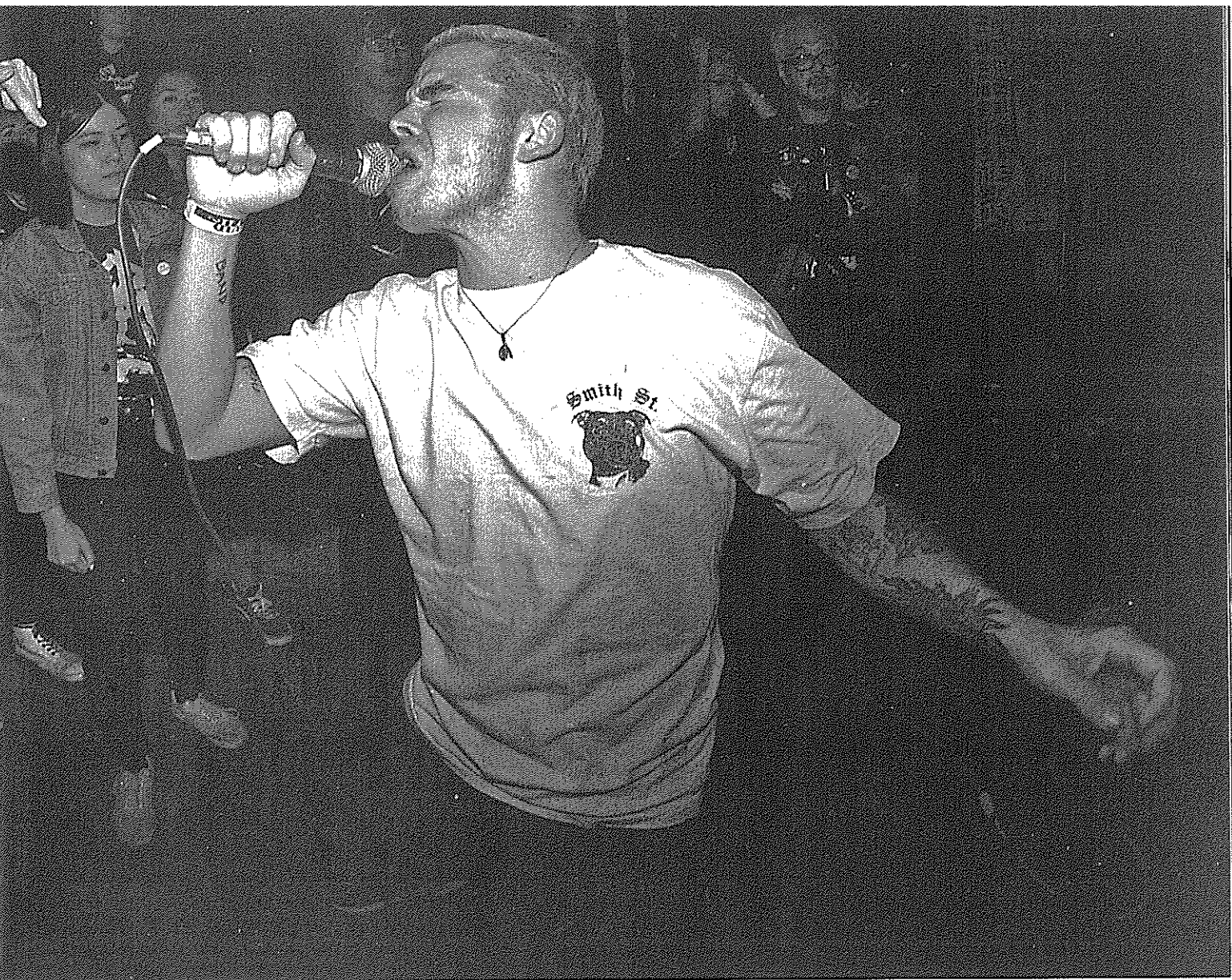
Joshua: It's definitely not conscious.

Sienna: It was interesting when we played in a rural spot like Western Mass because it felt so different to me but Bill was like "This is what every show I used to play was like."

Joshua: You really needed to play wherever you could get a space. I remember being sixteen years old and calling community centers and essentially lying about the event you wanted to have because you knew they wouldn't be down with a show.

Bad Bill: And for me, I was even too young at the time to even book shows at real venues.

**MRR: You recently played a show with bands from the francophone hardcore scene, which is pretty isolated from the mostly anglophone DIY punk scene. What was that show like for you all?**



Sebbe: It was like being on tour in our own city—it felt like we were an out of town band even though we all lived like fifteen minutes from the venue.

Sienna: Yeah it was like what the fuck, we've played this venue before, where have all of these people been hiding?

Bad Bill: There was like three or four people at the front who knew most of the words and like I had never seen these people before. How do you know all of these lyrics? Why are you never at shows that we play if you seem to like us so much? But it was awesome. It was everything that I always wanted to have happen at a set that I'm playing. People moshed when they were supposed to mosh, did some stage moves, and went for a front flip stage dive. It was sick, it was great.

Joshua: I feel like it was all around such a positive thing.

Sebbe: I anticipated no one watching us.

**MRR: Why do you think you've never seen these people or bands before?**

Sebbe: It's language just like everything in Montreal, it's the two solitudes.

Sienna: Like if you don't have francophone friends inviting you to these shows, then you just never find out about it.

Joshua: I was so stoked when we got asked to play this show because I feel like that's what we needed to get a chance to have the francophone

scene exposed to us.

Bad Bill: This is the weird thing to me that I have a hard time wrapping my head around. We're really good friends with some of the people from the francophone Antifa and they've known about us forever. So I'm like how do you all know about us but so many people from the French scene don't?

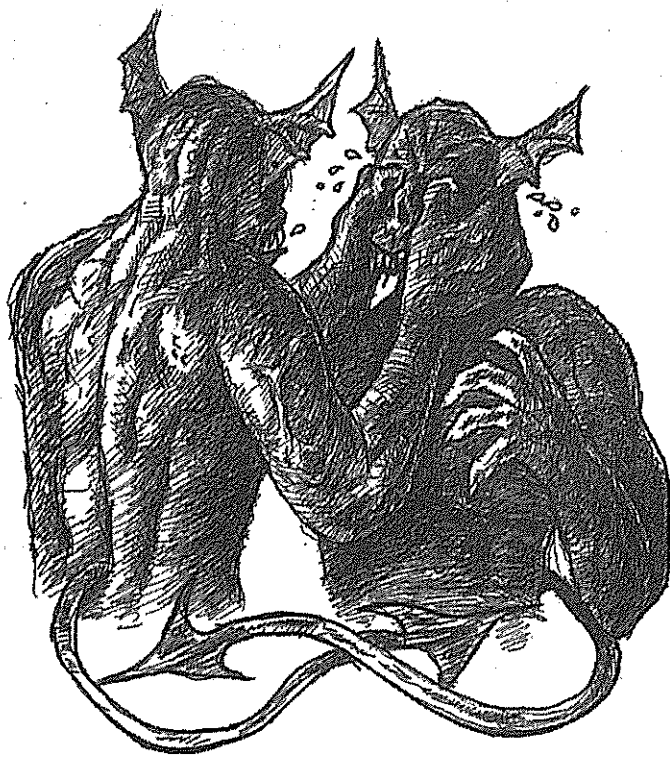
Sienna: It's because they're connected to you in other ways though, like through university.

**MRR: Not to speak badly on that show, but it was the first show that I had been to in a while where your band was the only one that wasn't entirely composed of cis dudes. Can you comment on being in a band that breaks this mold?**

Sienna: It was like that for so long, every show there were no non-men in any of the bands.

Sebbe: While there are a lot of bands starting out in Montreal that aren't just composed of white, cis, straight people, I think Toronto is doing better on that. When you look at what's getting noticed, there's way more attention than ever before on bands with diverse lineups, which is so good. There's a certain amount of possible tokenization going on here and there but it's sick that these people are getting positive attention. I sometimes forget about it when I'm on stage, like





in hardcore I lose track of my gender way more.

Sienna: To speak more to punk in general, it's strange how a lot of the compliments I get at shows aren't actually about how I play, even coming from non-men. Recently a girl came up to me after we played and told me how pretty I was and like, thank you and it's so sick that you are here, but yeah it's weird.

**MRR: What else would you critique about punk in general?**

Bad Bill: Even though the super moshy kind of hardcore is what I'm really into, I never really feel comfortable at these kind of shows because I'm so small. That's why I usually have more fun at punk shows because I can slam and it's very consensual and no one's gonna leave with their arm broken. One of the things about Gazm I'm most stoked about on is that people always say how much fun they have during our sets. I'm not hearing people tell me how uncomfortable they were during our show. That's my mission for Gazm: for anybody to come to our shows and feel comfortable but still go off.

Sebbe: I always feel encouraged when I see other trans people moshing for the first time.

Bad Bill: Like when you see that non-men are not afraid to get in the pit, it's great.

Sebbe: And that they're excited to see a hardcore band. I know people who were jaded about hardcore shows but have told me that because of bands like ours, they realize that do really like hardcore. Hardcore has its stigma because so many people have been hogging it for so long.

**MRR: Any critiques about punk in Montreal more specifically?**

Bad Bill: It seems like at every DIY show there is always one drunk, old white guy with dreads that is causing a problem and any time somebody calls him on it, there's like ten of his friends backing him up and trying to vouch for him.

Sienna: It seems like it's impossible to get kicked out of a show here. Like when someone like that is making so many people feel uncomfortable, no one will do anything about it.

Sebbe: My standard shit talk goes to the thirty-year-old guys coming out of mosh retirement and just touching everyone.

**MRR: These things seem universal and not too specific to Montreal though right?**

Sebbe: Yeah, you're right.

Sienna: People making orgasm noises at me because of our band name. That's happened at three shows here in Montreal. Stop it, I hate it, I'm done with that.

Bad Bill: Why did we call our band Gazm?

Sienna: It was a mix of two other band name ideas, Gaz and Spasm.

Bad Bill: I'm so down with the name, but yeah that fucking sucks.

**MRR: So what do you think punk needs more of in 2017?**

Sebbe: Metal!!

Bad Bill: Less cool guys, more novelty merch, more on-stage shoutouts.

**MRR: What do you plan on doing with the new record, *Menace to the Earth*?**

Sebbe: Mostly the regular stuff. Distro it, tour on it, and then make another record.

Joshua: It should be out early 2017. We're putting it out through Byllepest Distro (from Oslo, NO), who also released the vinyl version of Dirty Beach. I'm stoked, it's so sick to be working with someone who is genuinely excited about our music and down to help us make records.

Bad Bill: We want to do a three week US tour next summer but honestly after that, on to the next one. There was a moment this past summer when we were not really jamming, writing, or hanging out that often and I thought that after the tour we just did, we wouldn't really know where to go with the band next but the tour wound up being so sick and now I'm just in it to keep pumping songs out.

Sebbe: Tour was the romantic getaway that we needed.

**MRR: So that was the first Gazm tour and for many of you, your first actual tour. What was it like and why did you decide tour?**

Sienna: It was like the Gazm advertising tour—the only way that people in the States were going to discover and get down with our band was if we went to their cities.

Bad Bill: It was on my bucket list, I've checked off so many things from it with Gazm. I think it's a really important thing to do as a band but also as a person. To plan something this extensive, to go out and meet so many cool and interesting people all across the map. It was sick, I just want to do it again.

**MRR: Two of you are from the east coast of Canada, do you think you will tour there? When a band comes through a small town like where you two are from, it can be inspiring for a lot of punks to start their own projects. Do you feel a desire and obligation to go tour there?**

Bad Bill: I 100% feel an obligation to do that but it's hard to say if we'll be able to. It's really important to me that I one day do that with a band that I'm in because I know how important it was for me when I was younger. If I do it, I would want it to be all ages shows as well because on top of not many punk bands touring there, the shows are usually always at bars when they do happen.

Joshua: The thing that just sucks about travelling to the east coast is that it's just so far. To get from here to where I grew up is like a nine-hour drive and you need

to add an hour because you cross time zones. So it's ten hours of driving just to get to your starting point for an east coast tour. It can be worthwhile in a lot of ways though because in some of these cities, your band can just become the biggest thing to these people. Almost every Newfoundlander that I know owns a Hoax shirt because they were one of the only hardcore bands to go there.

**MRR: Sebbe moved back to Toronto, which is six hours away, last spring. How has being a long distance band been?**

Joshua: One thing that's been so nice is that it gave a reason not to take every show offer. Coming to Montreal, it was the first time in my life where I've found that I was in a band that was maybe playing too much. Don't get me wrong, I love playing shows with this band but it got to the point where we were sometimes playing three times in two weeks and really saturating ourselves. Sebbe moved right around the time where we really needed to start saying no to some things.

Sienna: Now that we only play at most once a month, our friends will try and make an effort to come to our shows.

Bad Bill: The biggest bummer has been that after tour, I was so excited and just wanted to keep steamrolling forward with new songs.

Sienna: New stuff just happens slower now.

Sebbe: Even though there is that distance, I've been in bands before where I lived in the same city and made slower progress.

Joshua: It definitely has forced us to be more productive with our time. Tour was also such a good investment. Aside from being able to play shows in all these different places, I feel like it helped us so much in terms of being comfortable with our songs.

Sebbe: We've also all got other bands on the side, so we're still able to practice playing often enough.

**MRR: What other bands are you all in?**

Bad Bill: I play in a pop punk band called Doggo (with members of Grey Bath / Vile Intent / Crawler / Dreamboat) and Mean, who Sienna also plays in.

Sebbe: I play in Winter '94 with Luciano from the Boys and Lia from Triage / Conman.

Bad Bill: Big shoutout Luciano and to The Boys, one of the bands who does not get enough credit on a larger scale.

Joshua: I also play in Weird Star and Gutless Wonder. Also, stay tuned for Lethal Thought. That's coming.

**MRR: And lastly, what's great about the Montreal scene, who would you shoutout?**

Sebbe: Remwar, Faze, Nuke, Grosser.

Bad Bill: Jacuzzi, Cell, Dan Pelissier, JTA, literally every band here. It's all great, Montreal is doing pretty alright.



*The Menace to the Earth EP is out now on Byllepest Distro.*

*Listen at [gazmmmtl.bandcamp.com](http://gazmmmtl.bandcamp.com).*